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CULTURE MINISTRY LOOKING INTO RAM SETU: CENTRE TO SC

The Centre told the Supreme Court that the process to declare Ram Setu as a national heritage monument is underway

SWAMY TURNS DOWN COURT'S SUGGESTION

Following the Centre's submission on Thursday, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice J B Pardiwala, which was hearing a PIL by BJP's Subramanian Swamy, suggested he could make a representation to the government if he wished so. Swamy said: "I do not want to meet anybody... We are in the same party, it was there in our manifesto..."

IT'S A SIMPLE 'YES' OR 'NO' QUESTION

- "They (govt) have to say 'yes' or 'no'," Swamy added. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta said the government is looking into it
- Ram Setu is a 48-km-long chain of limestone shoals between Pamban Island, off Tamil Nadu, and Mannar Island, off Sri Lanka. Legend has it that Lord Ram's army had built it | P11

18,400 yrs

AGE OF RAM SETU, SAY RESEARCHERS OF ANNA AND MADRAS UNIVERSITIES

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Sunak defends Modi against BBC's TV series

Snubs Pak-origin MP; MEA pushes back too

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

BRITISH Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday defended his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in the UK Parliament over a recent BBC documentary titled 'India: The Modi Question.'

Sunak also snubbed Pakistan-origin Labour Party MP, Imran Hussain, who asked if he agreed with claims in the BBC show that some UK foreign office diplomats believed that "Modi was directly responsible" for the 2002 riots in Gujarat. "The country doesn't tolerate persecution where it appears anywhere. The UK government's position on this has been clear and long-standing and hasn't changed, but I am not sure I agree at all with the characterisation the gentleman has put forward to," Sunak said.

The documentary aired by BBC Two on January 17 sparked outrage in India. It has since been removed from Youtube and its second part is scheduled to be broadcast on January 24.

"This has not been screened in India, so I am only going to comment in the context of what I have heard about it and what my colleagues have seen. Let me just make it very clear that we think this is a propaganda piece designed to push a particular discredited narrative. The bias, the lack of objectivity and frankly a continuing colonial mindset is blatantly visible," said Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

This film is a reflection on the agency and individuals that are peddling this narrative, he said. The documentary has an interview by former British foreign secretary Jack Straw. In 2015, during a sting operation, Straw boasted to undercover journalists that he had operated 'under the radar' to use his influence and change EU rules on behalf of a firm that paid him £60,000 a year.

In his pushback, former Indian foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal said, "I was FS during the period and am aware of mischief by UK mission."

EXPRESS READ

NEP to be implemented in select schools in Feb

BENGALURU: Education Minister BC Nagesh said the NEP 2020 would be implemented in the school education system as early as February in select schools. He said the NEP would be introduced in 400-500 schools. P4

New Zealand PM Ardern to step down

WELLINGTON: New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern said on Thursday she was leaving office after five and a half years. "I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice," she expressed. P14

PM unveils ₹10K cr projects in K'taka

PM Narendra Modi at the 'Hakku Patra' distribution event on Thursday | EXPRESS

PM's Kalaburagi event enters record books

PM Narendra Modi's programme in poll-bound Karnataka entered the record books, for distribution of the highest number of hakku patras (property title deeds) to 51,900 people in Kalaburagi. P6

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @ K'buragi/Yadgir

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched projects worth over ₹10,800 crore in the Kalyana Karnataka region and handed over property title deeds to people from the Banjara community, adding heft to BJP's development push ahead of the state Assembly polls.

In his second visit to Karnataka within a week, the PM emphasised the "double-engine government" push for the development and welfare of people and hit out at the opposition for neglecting development by indulging in vote-bank politics. "The focus of the double-engine government on infrastructure and reforms is turning Karnataka into an investors' choice," the PM said after launching projects including the Extension, Renovation and Modernisation Project (ENMP) of Narayanpur Left Bank Canal at Kodekal of Yadgir district.

Later in the day, at a programme in Malkhed of Kalaburagi district, he initiated the distribution of Hakku Patras (property title deeds) to 51,900 people of the Banjara community, which is a significant number, and registered in the World Book of Records. In Kodekal and Malkhed, the PM slammed the opposition parties that were in power earlier, for treating Dalits, suppressed classes and the Banjara community as vote banks, and not working for their welfare. P6

SC collegium again reiterates 5 names

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

AMIDST the ping-pong battle between the judiciary and the executive on reiterations for elevation as judges, the Supreme Court collegium in its resolutions uploaded on Thursday again reiterated five names of advocates for judgeship in different high courts. The five names are Saurabh Kirpal, son of former CJI B N Kirpal (for Delhi High Court); Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen (Calcutta High Court); Somasekhar Sundaresan (Bombay High Court) and R John Sathyan (Madras High Court).

Saurabh Kirpal, who is openly gay, was first recommended by the Delhi HC collegium in 2017. His elevation was objected to by the Centre due to the Swiss nationality of his partner as well as his intimate relationship and openness about his sexual orientation.

Rejecting them, the SC collegium's resolution said, "The fact that Mr Saurabh Kirpal has been open about his orientation is a matter which goes to his credit. As a prospective candidate for judgeship, he has not been surreptitious about his orientation. In view of the constitutionally recognized rights which the candidate espouses, it would be manifestly contrary to the constitutional principles laid down by the Supreme Court to reject his candidature on that ground." CONTINUED ON: P11

Maliwal molested, dragged by drunk driver

Swati Maliwal

Kejri targets LG

"LG sahib is requested to leave politics for a few days and focus on law and order," Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal said, taking a swipe at Lt Guv V K Saxena

UJWAL JALALI @ New Delhi

OUT on inspection to check the dark spots of the national capital at night, the city's women's commission chief herself allegedly became the victim of molestation in the wee hours of Thursday.

Swati Maliwal, chairperson of Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), on Thursday alleged that she was molested by a drunk man and was dragged by his car for 10-15 metres outside AIIMS with her hand stuck in the vehicle's window.

"We received a PCR call at 3.10 am by a special patrolling vehicle that a car had dragged a woman for some distance near AIIMS hospital's gate number 2," Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Chandan Chowdhary said.

The official said that a man, in an inebriated condition, had stopped his car next to Maliwal and invited her to sit in the car. When Maliwal refused, he left, only to return within minutes and pester her again to get into his car.

Maliwal alleged that the man, identified as Harish Chandra (47), a resident of Sangam Vihar, was also making lewd and vulgar gestures.

When Maliwal tried to catch hold of him, the accused rolled up the window and the DCW chief's hand got stuck.

The man then hit the accelerator and Maliwal was dragged along with the car for 10-15 metres, by which time she fortunately managed to wriggle out her hand. The police apprehended the accused by 3.34 am, informed DCP Chowdhary.

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